Chapter 50
I SHOULD HAVE JUST TAKEN THE MEDICINE HERE.
I'M SORRY, MY LADY.
AILAN, WHO HADN'T BEEN FEELING WELL, RETURNED FROM HER STAY AT THE CLINIC.
IT SEEMS SHE GOT CAUGHT TAKING THE COLD REMEDY I MADE FOR HER...
...AND THE OLDER COURT LADY INSISTED ON KNOWING WHERE AILAN HAD GOTTEN IT.

AND, UMM... THE CLINIC...
...THE CLINIC WOULDN'T LOOK TOO KINDLY ON SOMEONE SMUGGLING IN A HOME-BREWED POTION.
MAKES SENSE.
WITH NO DOCTOR AND THUS NO PERMISSION TO DISPENSE MEDICINE...
!
...WOULD ALSO LIKE TO BORROW MAOMAO...
...FOR THE TIME BEING.
OH BOY... I'VE BEEN SUMMONED.
OH MY!
OH MY!

Chapter 50 A Third Turn at the Crystal Palace ①

I WAS ON THE HUNT FOR A MEDICINAL INGREDIENT.
SHE CAUGHT ME IN THE ACT?
HEY, MAO-MAO ...?
WERE YOU UP TO SOMETHING WITH THE LANTERNS IN THE GARDEN YESTERDAY?
THEY'VE EVEN ASSIGNED YINGHUA TO BE MY CHAPER-ONE...
WHAT A HASSLE.
...AND PROMPTLY WENT LOOKING FOR THE INGREDIENTS WITH WHICH TO MAKE IT.
...I CAME UP WITH AN IDEA FOR A NEW MEDICINE...
AFTER BUMPING INTO JINSHI AND GAO SHUN ON MY WAY BACK FROM THE CLINIC LAST NIGHT...

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REALLY...?
...YOU'VE BEEN CRAMMING TOO MANY THINGS INTO YOUR ROOM LATELY.
IN ANY CASE...
...DON'T TELL ME IT'S A BUG OR SOMETHING.
YOU NEEDED THE LANTERN TO FIND IT?
IT'S NOT A BUG.
GLARE
...AS SHE WALKS AROUND WITH THIS IRATE LOOK ON HER FACE.
NOW THAT'S A FRIGHT-ENING THOUGHT.
IT REEKS OF MEDICINE, SAYS LADY HONG-NIANG...
...SHE'D NEVER HAVE LASTED HERE AT THE INNER COURT.
BUT IF SHE WASN'T SO STRONG-WILLED...
HEY!
THWACK
OUR HEAD LADY-IN-WAITING IS BOTH QUICK AND TOUGH.

OOH, THAT'D BE LOVELY!
SMIRK
ニヤリ
...AND STRAIGHT INTO THE STABLES OR SOMETHING IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL!
ONE OF THESE DAYS, SHE MIGHT KICK YOU OUT OF YOUR ROOM...
IF I MOVED EVERYTHING INTO THE SHED, I MIGHT EVEN BE ABLE TO WORK WITH FIRE TO MAKE MEDICINE.
I UNEARTHED ALL KINDS OF UNUSED TOOLS AND SUPPLIES WHEN I WAS HELPING TO CLEAN OUT THE QUACK'S OFFICE.
...AND FAR ENOUGH AWAY FROM EVERYONE'S ROOMS THAT I COULD MAKE AS MUCH NOISE AT NIGHT AS I WANTED.
THE STORAGE SHED IN THE GARDEN IS MUCH LARGER THAN MY CURRENT QUARTERS...

HUH?! WAIT, I DON'T THINK Y—
C'MON! LET'S GET INSIDE AND GET THIS OVER WITH RIGHT AWAY!
HEY! HOLD ON!
UMM, I WAS ONLY JOK—
I'LL BRING UP THE SHED WITH LADY HONGNIANG AS SOON AS WE GET BACK AND SEE WHAT SHE THINKS!
I APOLOGIZE FOR WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY.
CLINIC COURT LADY SHENLU

SHE HAS EYES OF GREEN, JUST LIKE CONSORT GYOKUYO.
PERHAPS THAT'S WHY HER NAME IS WRITTEN WITH THE CHARACTER FOR "GREEN."
SHE TOO MAY BE OF WESTERN BLOOD.
I DID NOT REALIZE THAT YOU TWO WERE FROM THE HOUSEHOLD OF THE HONORED CONSORT.
THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
THE WORTHY CONSORT
THE VIRTUOUS CONSORT
THE PURE CONSORT
COURT LADIES OUTSIDE THE FOUR PRINCIPAL CONSORTS' PALACES WILL OFTEN REFER TO THE CONSORTS BY THIS MONIKER.
THE HONORED CONSORT
"THE HONORED CONSORT" IS CONSORT GYOKUYO'S OFFICIAL TITLE.
OR MAYBE THERE'S SOME OTHER SPECIAL REASON SHE'S STILL HERE.
...SHE MUST BE ONE SHREWD, WELL-EDUCATED COURT LADY.
...BUT GIVEN THE LENGTH OF HER TENURE AT THE INNER COURT...
YESTERDAY SHE SEEMED LIKE A NO-NONSENSE MOTHER TYPE...

WHAT-EVER THE CASE MAY BE...
...BEING TREATED THIS WAY BY SOMEONE LIKE HER MAKES ME FEEL RATHER AWKWARD.
IT MUST BE UNCOM-FORTABLE FOR HER AS WELL ...
...SENDING FOR THE ATTENDANT TO ONE OF THE FOUR PRINCIPAL CONSORTS ...
...ONE WHOSE VARIOUS ANTICS HAVE HAD A BLIND EYE TURNED TO THEM.
I KNOW THIS IS IMPERTINENT OF ME, BUT I HAVE A REQUEST I MUST ASK OF YOU.
WHAT IS IT?
I'M USED TO PEOPLE BEING OBNOXIOUS TOWARD ME.
AFTER ALL, I DARESAY I'M GUILTY OF ACTING MUCH THE SAME TOWARD THEM.

I WOULD LIKE YOU TO MAKE SOME MEDICINE...
...FOR ONE OF THE WORTHY CONSORT'S WOMEN.
WHAT ?!
BAM
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'RE ASKING?!

...TO TREAT A MEMBER OF ANOTHER CONSORT'S HOUSE-HOLD...
IT'S NO SMALL THING TO ASK ME, AN ATTENDANT TO CONSORT GYOKUYO...
BY "THE WORTHY CONSORT," SHE MEANS CONSORT LIHUA.
YES, I'M WELL AWARE.
I'M SORRY TO PRY...
MAO-MAO?!
...I'M SURE YOU MUST HAVE A VERY GOOD REASON TO ASK SUCH A THING OF ME.
AS YOU WISH.
...BUT WOULD YOU MIND SHARING THE DETAILS WITH US?

THE WOMAN OF WHOM I SPEAK IS A MAID I WOULD OFTEN RUN INTO AT THE NORTHERN LAUNDRY.
AS I HEARD IT, SHE'D BEEN SUFFERING FROM FATIGUE AND A SLIGHT FEVER FOR SOME TIME.
SHE THEN DEVELOPED A CURIOUS COUGH...
...SO I REC-OMMENDED SHE TAKE A BREAK AND GET PLENTY OF REST.

SHE DIDN'T COME BY THE CLINIC?
NO, SHE DIDN'T ...
...THOUGH I'D SUGGESTED IT BECAUSE OF THE ODD COUGH.
AFTER THAT, SHE STOPPED COMING TO THE LAUNDRY ALTOGETHER.

SHE HAD BEEN DENIED LEAVE TO DO SO BY HER SUPERIORS...
...AS FAR AS I COULD TELL.
AND THERE WE HAVE THE PROBLEM WITH THAT PLACE.
A LAUNDRY MAID LIKE THE WOMAN IN QUESTION...
...WOULD HAVE GONE NOT TO THE CONSORT BUT TO ONE OF HER LADIES TO ASK PERMISSION.
IT'S QUITE LIKELY THEY JUST BRUSHED OFF THE REQUEST OF THE LOWLY MAID.
I HAVEN'T SEEN THE GIRL...
...IN FIVE DAYS.

SIGH...
WHAT A MESS THIS IS TURNING INTO.
DOES THIS MAID IN DISTRESS REALLY EVEN EXIST?!
THAT'S TRUE.
SHE MAY HAVE JUST STARTED DOING LAUNDRY ELSE-WHERE.
I THINK WE SHOULD LOOK INTO IT.
YOU'RE TELLING ME!
HER CONDITION ISN'T ONE WE CAN IGNORE, GOING BY HER SYMPTOMS.
...WE NEED TO FIND HER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
IF THE STORY IS AS SHENLU SAID...

...MAO-MAO.
I KNOW YOU'RE INCLINED TO BE REALLY CURIOUS ABOUT THIS KIND OF THING...
...BUT THE CRYSTAL PALACE IS THE CRYSTAL PALACE. WE NEED TO KNOW OUR PLACE.
IF LEFT UNTREATED...
...THE ILLNESS MAY NOT STOP AT THE WALLS OF THE CRYSTAL PALACE.
YOU HAVE TO FORMALLY REQUEST AN AUDIENCE WITH THE CONSORT FIRST.
JUMPING IN WILLY-NILLY IS JUST NOT DONE.
...OH. RIGHT.
I GUESS I'LL ASK JINSHI TO TAKE CARE OF IT FOR ME.
FOR NOW, I NEED TO THINK OF SOMETHING CALMING...
RUSTLE
IT'S TRUE. I'D BETTER NOT GET AHEAD OF MYSELF.
I'M RARING TO GO OVER THERE RIGHT AWAY...
...BUT MY LAST ERROR IS STILL FRESH ON EVERYONE'S MINDS, I'M SURE.

POUNCE
WHAT THE ...?
MAO-MAO ?!
BOING
BOING
FWIP
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
HEY!
WHAT DID I JUST SAY?!
I'M SORRY.
I SPOTTED WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR, SO I JUST WENT FOR IT.

FLIK
SEE?
ITS BODY GOT AWAY, BUT I MANAGED TO GRAB ITS TAIL.
GIVE IT UP, WOULD YOU?!
YOU MEAN THE BUG FROM LAST NIGHT?
I TOLD YOU, IT'S NOT A BUG.
AND IT ISN'T EVEN THE WHOLE THING, FOR THAT MATTER.
LAST NIGHT, I WAS ON THE LOOKOUT...
...FOR LIZARDS HUNTING THE MOTHS DRAWN TO THE LANTERNS.
IF LIZARDS LOSE THEIR TAILS, THEY CAN GROW THEM BACK.
A WISE MAN ONCE SAID...
...THAT ONE MUSTN'T LOSE HOPE UNTIL THE VERY END.
TO GIVE UP MEANS THAT ALL IS ALREADY LOST.

TO FORMULATE A MEDICINE THAT WILL REGROW CERTAIN BODY PARTS...
...ONE MUST START BY LEARNING MORE ABOUT THAT WHICH POSSESSES A SIMILAR FORM AND CAPABILITY.
I WANTED TO KNOW WHY LIZARDS...
...CAN GROW THEIR TAILS BACK AND—
...UM, YINGHUA?